

Washington, DC -- House Speaker Nancy Pelosi wants to raise the national debt ceiling by \$1.8 trillion to nearly twice what had been assumed in last year's budget.

The fact that Congress continues on an out-of-control spending path is bad enough. But making it worse is that House Leadership wants to hide this vote by tucking it into a bill funding our troops overseas.

The Speaker knows this outrageous proposal to balloon the debt ceiling cannot pass on its own. So she plans to attach it to a defense funding bill and rush it to the floor before the people can object.

The American people are tired of excessive spending on bailouts, failed stimulus bills and bridges to nowhere. And they are tired of Washington gamesmanship that insults their intelligence. The Congress is supposed to represent and serve the people, not vice versa.

POLITICO

Dems to lift debt ceiling by \$1.8 trillion, fear 2010 backlash

In a bold but risky year-end strategy, Democrats are preparing to raise the federal debt ceiling by as much as \$1.8 trillion before New Year's rather than have to face the issue again prior to the 2010 elections.

"We've incurred this debt. We have to pay our bills," House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer told POLITICO Wednesday. And the Maryland Democrat confirmed that the anticipated increase could be as high as \$1.8 trillion — nearly twice what had been assumed in last spring's budget resolution for the 2010 fiscal year.

The leadership is betting that it's better for the party to take its lumps now rather than risk further votes over the coming year. But the enormity of the number could create its own dynamic, much as another debt ceiling fight in 1985 gave rise to the Gramm-Rudman deficit reduction act mandating across-the-board spending cuts nearly 25 years ago.

Already in the Senate, there is growing pressure in both parties for the creation of a novel bipartisan task force empowered to force expedited votes in the next Congress on deficit reduction steps now shunned by lawmakers.

As introduced Wednesday, the legislation sets no specific targets for deficit reduction, but its 18-member task force — 16 of whom would come from Congress — is promised immense leverage to force change if they can first come together behind a plan.

"This is a defining moment," said Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-N.D.), one of the lead sponsors, and New Hampshire Sen. Judd Gregg, the panel's ranking Republican, is already maneuvering to try to add the legislation as an amendment to any bill tapped to carry the debt increase.

As explained by Hoyer and other Democrats, that will almost certainly be a pending \$636.4 billion Pentagon appropriations bill that includes \$128.3 in contingency funds for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The House leadership has held back the bill for weeks, saving it for this moment, but now appropriations clerks have been instructed to have a final package ready to go by Monday.